

Special Unit Senator

THE INVESTIGATION OF
THE ASSASSINATION OF
SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY



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with Theodore Taylor



RANDOM HOUSE • NEW YORK

Foreword

This book is a documentation of the investigation that followed the shooting and subsequent death of United States Senator Robert F. Kennedy, in Los Angeles, California, June 1968. It was written for the sole purpose of acquainting the American public with the facts of the investigation, and with the evidence, or lack of evidence, as it exists, of conspiracy in association with Senator Kennedy's assassination. The material herein was drawn from the files of the Los Angeles Police Department, and particularly from the exhaustive work of Special Unit Senator, a unique task force created for the investigation. I am a professional law enforcement officer and not a writer. In the final writing and editing stages of this book, my collaborator was Theodore Taylor.

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August 1, 1969

few days, some officers were conducting interviews without ever having seen the pantry, or accurate plans of it.

"A plot, plan, map, schematic, or whatever is applicable, and a brief statement of facts should be laid out, reproduced and made available to every department command, and staff, and to the investigators assigned to conducting interviews," Keene added. Pena recommended a "walk through the crime scene by every officer conducting interviews."

The three supervising officers were also critical of "detective note-taking," and failure to properly describe witnesses. Polaroid photographs would have been useful, serving the same purpose as Keene's recommendation that "there is no place in an operation of this type for handwritten reports." In short, the modern ease of sound tape proved itself.

I would agree with these constructive criticisms of the investigation. In retrospect, anything can be improved. Generally, however, I believe the department responded well in those first hectic, confusing hours. Men like Hughes, Jordan, Stillings, Sharaga, and many others, took the first shock. So did citizens at the scene, men like Dr. Abo, Jesse Unruh, Karl Uecker, Rosie Grier, Rafer Johnson and Juan Romero. They responded without hesitancy.

On July 25, 1969, Special Unit Senator was finally and officially closed out. It had been in existence for more than a year, and the ending marked the completion of the longest, largest and most expensive criminal investigation ever undertaken by the Los Angeles Police Department, possibly the most extensive investigation ever conducted by any local law enforcement agency.

On that date the voluminous SUS files, in four locked

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cabinets, were shifted out of Room 803 in Parker Center for storage. Contained in them is more than fifty thousand pages of documentation and material evidence. Evidence too large for the cabinets has been recorded by photography.

The Filing Guide to these records, drawer by drawer, tells the broad story of people, places and events from the birth of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan to the conclusion of his trial. Beyond that, to the final posttrial investigations of the special unit.

The indexed story is a more intimate view into these files, and shows, for example, that 4,818 separate interviews and interrogations were conducted. The official correspondence, daily logs, section reports, progress reports, gun and gun-range reports, case preparations, conspiracy-potential investigations seem to be endless. To this small mountain of paper may be added 155 items of booked evidence, 1,700 photographs, 190 reels of tape, and 20 reels of sixteen-millimeter film.

Although I read the reports daily and met constantly with Captain Brown and SUS team heads to explore one aspect or another of the investigation, I was astonished by the sheer mass of the unit's total effort.

Now it has all been boiled down to ten illustrated bound volumes entitled *An Investigation Summary of the Senator Robert F. Kennedy Assassination, June 5, 1968*. These volumes represent my report to the Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department. Two sets will remain with LAPD, and the third set has been forwarded to the Attorney General of the United States.

Throughout the entire SUS investigation, parallel investigations were conducted by the FBI and the District Attor-

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ney's staff. Information was freely exchanged. The course of the investigation and the results were closely followed by the Attorney General's office.

The *Summary's* main conclusions are these: (1) Sirhan fired the fatal shots that killed Senator Robert F. Kennedy and wounded five others. (2) Sirhan fired those shots with the intent to kill Senator Kennedy and his act was premeditated. (3) Sirhan was not under the influence of a drug or intoxicant at the time of the shooting. (4) Sirhan was legally sane at the time of the incident. (5) There was no evidence of a conspiracy in the crime.

The three remaining personnel who closed out SUS on July 25 of this year were Sergeants Michael Nielsen and Gordon McDevitt, and civilian clerk Bobby Upton. Pena, Higbie and Hernandez had previously been returned to their normal duties, as had Sergeant Gutierrez. Lieutenant Roy Keene, having conquered the tidal wave of record keeping and the writing of the major portion of the SUS final summary, had retired from LAPD to become the chief of police of Roseburg, Oregon. Sergeant Nielsen took over to draft the final volume of the report.

I do not know that I have ever considered *any* case completely closed. Simply because we deal with people, the possibility always exists that information will emerge long after the accused has received a verdict of guilty or not guilty; sometimes even after he has paid the harshest penalty, execution. Therefore, the files of any criminal investigation should never be completely closed.

On November 18, 1968, I noted in my daily log: "There is still no evidence of conspiracy, and at this moment I am

convinced that Sirhan is more politically oriented than he would appear to be for his age; that he did, in fact, kill Kennedy because of the Israel-Arab situation, and that he probably has some kind of martyr complex."

I have not changed my mind since that log notation. Not one shred of evidence exists, at this date, to indicate any conspiracy in the death of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. If someone can produce hard evidence of conspiracy, now or later, the SUS files, and the case, will be reopened immediately.

Almost a year ago I told SUS personnel that I thought this case was a "supreme test of our judicial processes." If the accused, an alien, could commit such a crime, one involving an international political figure, and a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and then receive a fair and unbiased investigation, and beyond that receive a fair and unbiased trial, then we could believe that our judicial processes were the right ones and could protect all of us.